

WATER AND WASTEWATER PLAN SUBMITTED TO HUD

(Gulfport, Mississippi) – Governor Haley Barbour announced today a master plan to develop and enhance water and wastewater infrastructure in Mississippi's coastal region has been submitted for approval to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Under the plan, which was revised and expanded after additional needs were identified during a public comment period, \$630 million in disaster recovery funds would be available to provide reliable water, sewer and storm water infrastructure.

"Tens of thousands of our citizens were without basic services when water and sewer systems in the Gulf Coast region were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina," Governor Barbour said. "These systems must be improved and storm-proofed to ensure future hurricanes do not have the same devastating impact. We must also provide infrastructure for new development, which will occur as people move further inland."

"I am very pleased that this master plan reflects cooperation among the state, local leaders and business interests to provide systems that will serve as a backbone to support existing and future growth in our coastal counties."

Governor Barbour said he expects HUD to approve the plan.

The request contains \$25 million already approved to fund emergency projects. To date, applications have been received from Pearl River County requesting \$2 million for water system in Poplarville, and Jackson County requesting \$3.9 million for a decentralized waste treatment facility in Hurley.

Governor Barbour and Mississippi's Congressional Delegation obtained appropriations of more than \$5 billion through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in hurricane recovery. Following a recommendation by the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal, the Legislature created the Gulf Coast Region Utility Board and utility authorities in 2006.

Out of this money, the Mississippi Gulf Water and Wastewater Plan was prepared under a contract between the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and MS Engineering Group, Inc., for improvements intended to support existing and future growth patterns, particularly as realized through new housing construction, and to promote economic development.

More than 300 projects were recommended. In order to be eligible, projects had to comply with HUD regulations, provide infrastructure in areas not served or underserved, and be able to be implemented by 2010.

The public comment period also revealed that areas in Hancock County were “ultra-distressed” and had suffered too much loss to provide the distribution or collection systems to benefit from the regional “backbone” system. As a result of that finding, \$47 million was added to the plan to provide systems in “ultra-distressed” areas.

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